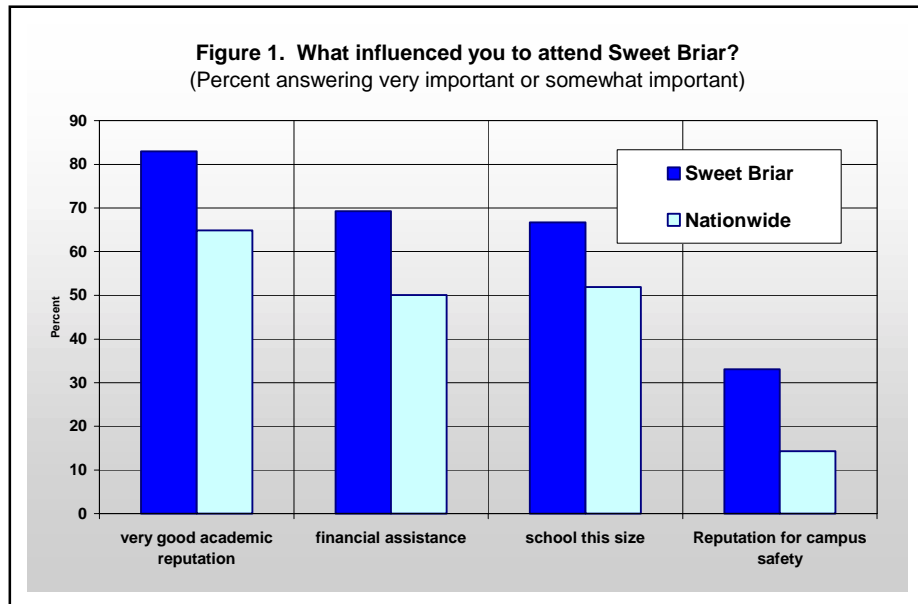


CIRP 2002: A glimpse at the Class of 2006

The CIRP or Freshman Survey offer insights into the drives and ambitions of entering students each fall. Since Sweet Briar has been participating in the survey since the early 1970s trends can also be examined and studied. The results from the Class of 2006 are given below.

When asked what influenced them to attend Sweet Briar (Figure 1), an overwhelming majority (83 %) of first-year students cited the “very good academic reputation” as being very important or somewhat important in their decision. This result compares with 65 percent nationally among women and 58 percent among men. Second in its importance ranking are financial

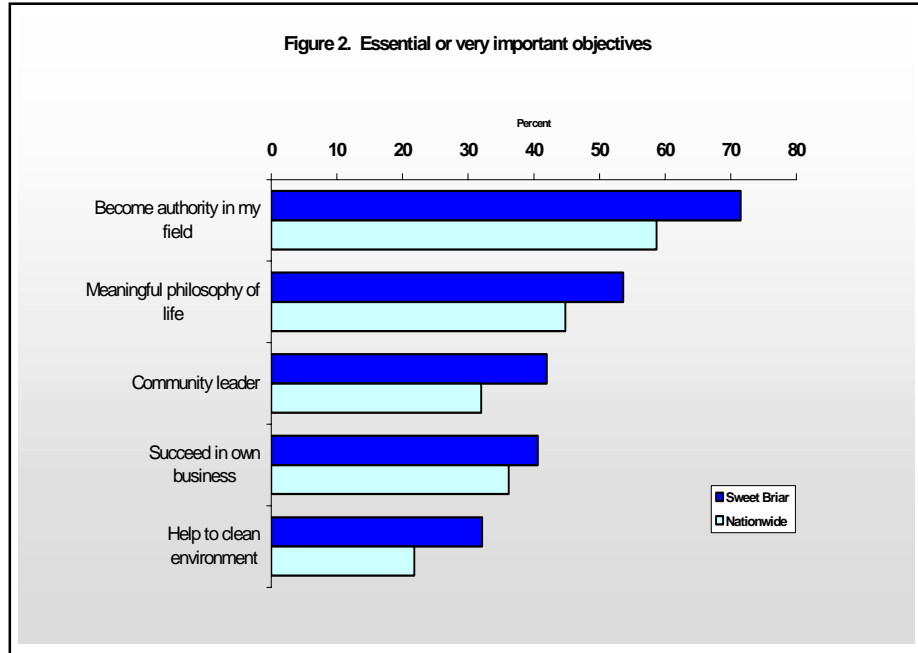
assistance and wanting a school of this size, both at around 69 percent compared nationally with women at other schools at around 50 percent. Students were impressed with the educational



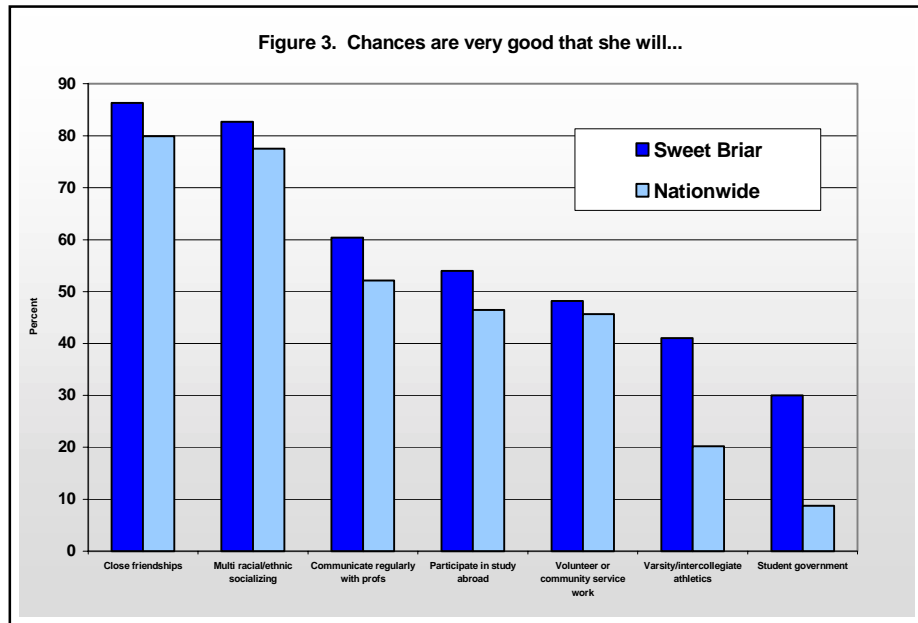
program offerings and the reputation for social activities ranking them both about 38 percent, which were both more than ten points lower nationally. Our students’ concern for campus safety was shown as 33 percent felt that it was crucial, more than twice that of our peers. This Class feels comfortable with their choice of Sweet Briar with 98 percent indicating that they plan to stay beyond two years.

From a group of twenty-one objectives, students were asked to rank their importance and five of these are shown in Figure 2. Seventy-two percent of students cited “becoming an authority in my field” as essential or very important compared to 59 percent nationally. Not far behind this was “being very well off financially” at 69 percent while 64 percent of peers felt this was important. “Developing a meaningful philosophy of life” was considered important by 54 percent while nationally this item lagged by ten points. Our first-year students understand before they enter the classroom that Sweet Briar will give them the liberal arts education necessary to achieve this goal. Evidence that our first-years are interested and involved in the real world can be seen in responses to the next items, which have to do with participation beyond the classroom. The first of these is “becoming a community leader” where 42 percent rated this as important. Also, a high priority was to “participate in a community action program” at 33 percent. Forty-two

percent of students felt that “becoming successful in a business of my own” was crucial, compared to 36 percent nationally, while 32 percent rated “becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment” highly – 32 percent vs. 22 percent nationwide.



Asking students to project about future plans on a scale from no chance to a very good chance, the Class of 2006 came out strongly ahead of our peers – women at four-year colleges – on most measures (Figure 3). Most of these measures are, not surprisingly, those that directly reflect interest in a small college that places



importance on close engagement among students and faculty. In other studies, especially NSSE, Sweet Briar was recognized as an exemplary school with regard to student engagement.

Several items refer to the type of close interactions that students can expect at Sweet Briar: “develop close friendships with other students” and “socialize with someone of

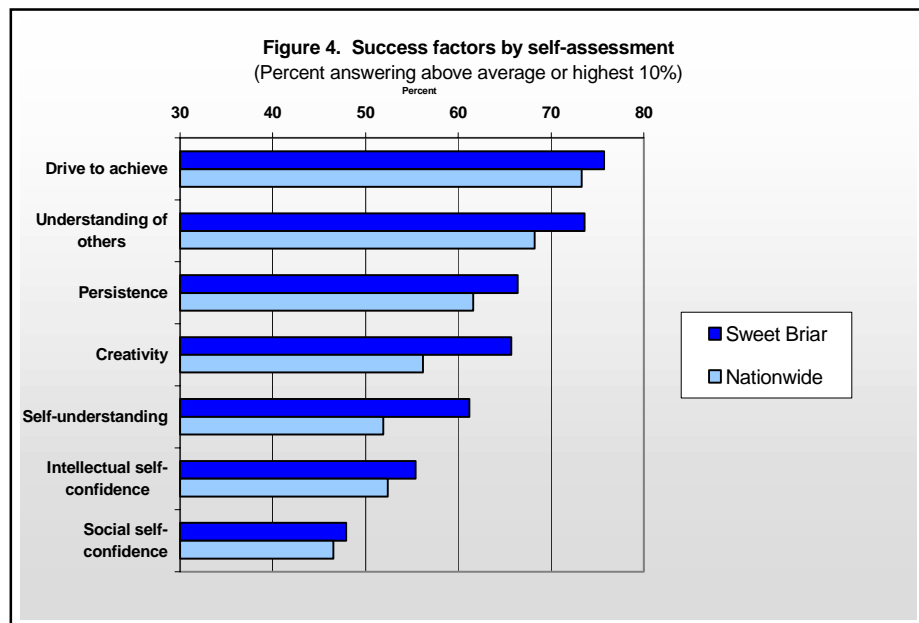
another racial/ethnic group” were rated at over 80 percent. Sixty percent of students indicated chances were very good for the item to “communicate regularly with your professors” compared to 49 percent of our peers. Similar differences were seen in “participate in study abroad program” and “participate in volunteer or community service work” with the Class of 2006 expressing a greater interest in these items. On a different question 78 percent said that they had international travel experience and 71 percent indicated that they intend to study abroad. This class also intends to be engaged in experiential learning with 77 percent expressing an interest in summer research, internships, independent study, or community service programs.

Perhaps the greatest disparity between Sweet Briar and peer institutions was the students’ interest in varsity/intercollegiate athletics and student government where the difference was 2:1 and 3:1, respectively. The Class of 2006 also expressed a higher interest than our peers in student clubs/groups, all of these being a reflection of small size and high level of engagement that the size affords.

The entering class is similar to prior years in their preparation for college. Fifty-four percent (compared to 39 percent of peers) spent 6 or more hours per week doing homework. Over half (51 %) took between 2-6 AP courses in high school compared to 38 percent of women at peer institutions. Following this, a higher number went on to take AP exams – 42 percent at Sweet Briar compared to 27 percent for peers.

A self-assessment question on the survey gave students a chance to rate themselves compared to an average person of their age on a five-point scale from highest 10% to lowest 10%. The Class of 2006 was weaker in mathematical ability and computer skills compared to peer schools but higher in most everything else based on the percent who rated themselves as “above average or highest 10% as compared with the average person of her age”.

The items that are displayed in Figure 4 such as “drive to achieve” and “persistence” follow the theme of previous questions with students wanting to become leaders or authorities. Their recognition of inner creativity



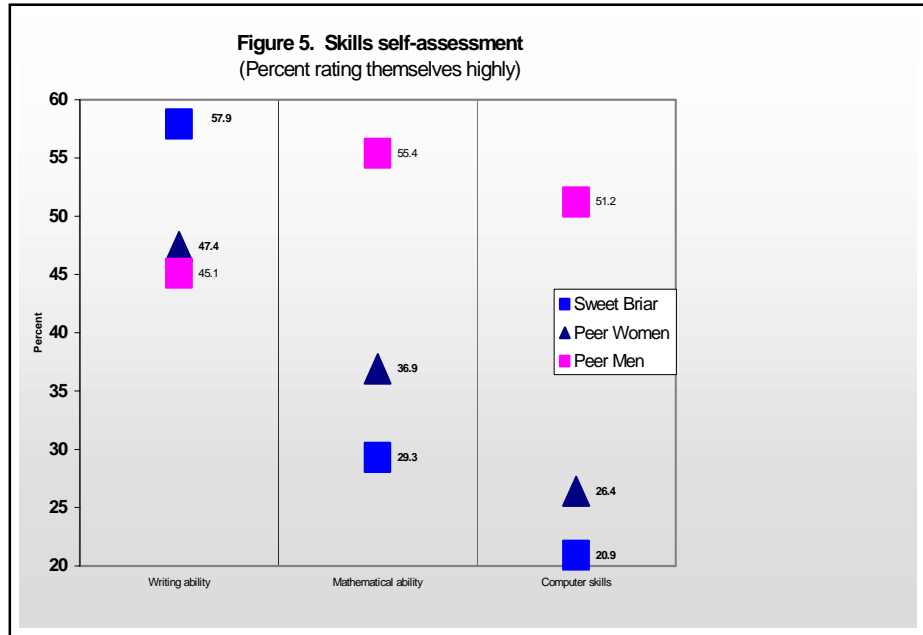
is helpful for succeeding intellectually and socially. The class rated “understand others”

and “self-understanding” highly which are positively linked to previous high ratings of “close friendships” and other measures of engagement. Higher than peer ratings on self-understanding, and intellectual and social self-confidence are implicit in a young woman interested in learning about herself and her place in the world.

In examining skills self-assessment the biggest gender gaps occur in mathematics and knowledge of computer use. As seen in Figure 5 Sweet Briar students lag slightly behind

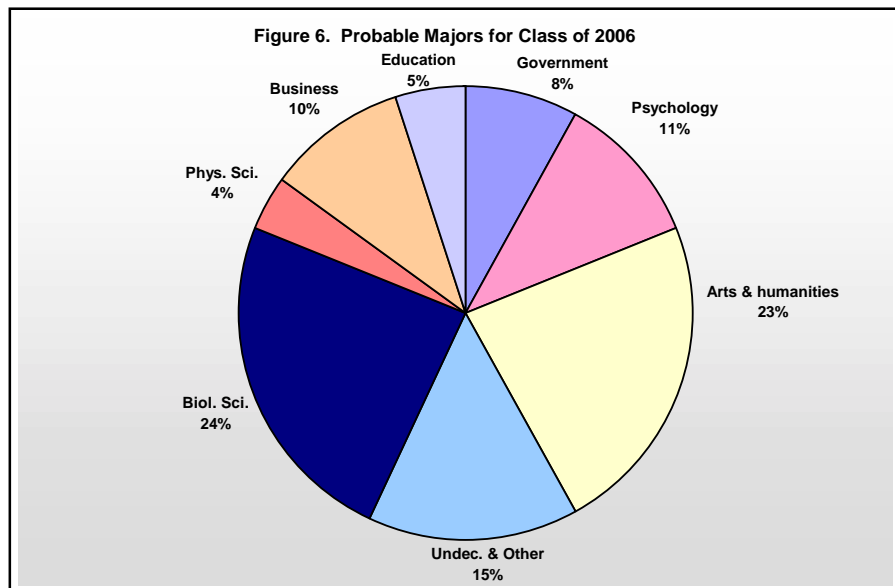
women at peer institutions in skill in using computers where 21 percent rate themselves highly compared to about 24 percent nationwide.

This compares to forty-nine percent of men at peer schools who rated themselves in



the highest category. For mathematical ability, men at peer schools gave the identical rating of 49 percent while peer women scored 35 percent followed by Sweet Briar at 29 percent. The rating scales reversed on the writing ability measure however, where 58 percent of the Class of 2006 rated themselves highly compared to 50 percent of peer women. Here, peer men scored lower than both women’s groups at 49 percent.

The Class of 2006 is interested in a range of liberal arts programs with 4 percent interested in physical sciences and 24 percent in biological sciences, which is about twice the interest level



from last year (Figure 6). About 10 percent are interested in business, up from about 7 percent of last year's class, while interest in psychology, government, and arts & humanities are similar to last year's.

Reactions were split on feelings toward roommates with differing race/ethnicity or religious backgrounds. Forty-five percent were pleased to have the opportunity to live with a person of a different racial or ethnic background while 53 percent had no strong feelings in either direction. Fewer were willing to state this positively for roommates of different religious backgrounds as 38 percent felt that they would welcome the opportunity, while 59 percent had no strong feelings in either direction.

In keeping with national trends that show women with greater interest in post graduate studies than men, around 88 percent of the entering class wishes to pursue a degree beyond their baccalaureate. In contrast, 78 percent of women at peer institutions are inclined to do so. Peer women show greater interest in Master's degrees while Sweet Briar students by a two to one margin wish to pursue professional degrees such as law and medicine.

In summary, based on the profile information from the CIRP survey, the Class of 2006 is confident and capable, with a drive to achieve at Sweet Briar and beyond in their chosen career path.

Race/Ethnicity:	
White	88%
African American	2%
Asian American	3%
American Indian	1%
Hispanic	3%
Non-resident alien	2%

Residency:	
Virginia	33%
North Carolina	8%
Texas	7%
Maryland	6%
CA, FL, GA, MA	3% each
NY, PA, SC	

	Mother / Father	
Has graduate degree	20%	35%
Has college degree	39%	27%
Professional occupation	19%	54%

Average high school GPA	3.50
Top 10% of high school Class	30%
Average SAT scores	
Math	550
Verbal	590